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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 002304

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNESCO](#) [KPKO](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: GOF STRUGGLES OVER EGYPTIAN UNESCO CANDIDATE;
FIRMLY AGAINST SOMALIA PKO

REF: PARIS 2229

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew Young.
Reasons 1.4b,d

¶1. (C) Summary: IO A/S-Equivalent Berman confirmed December 11 to IO A/S Hook, CDA and Pol M/C the grave reservations at the MFA about the Egyptian candidate for UNESCO Director-General, whom she labeled an anti-Semite. She spoke frankly of the difficulties stemming from Sarkozy's 2007 commitment of French support and admitted that Sarkozy's diplomatic advisors had not yet found an occasion to focus the French President on the problem. On anti-piracy efforts at the UNSC, Berman gave assurances of French agreement with the U.S. approach, including the effort to authorize ground action. She was very clear however in rejecting arguments for a UN PKO to replace AMISOM in Somalia, suggesting the only viable approach would be a small mission solely to protect the SRSG and UN offices in Mogadishu. End Summary.

French Dilemma Over Egyptian UNESCO Candidate, Sarkozy's Misstep

¶2. (C) IO A/S-Equivalent Sylvie Berman confirmed to IO A/S Brian Hook the MFA's grave reservations about the candidacy of Egyptian Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni to be UNESCO Director-General, while making clear the awkwardness of the French situation during a 12/11 meeting with IO A/S Hook, CDA Pekala, and Pol M/C Allegrone. She explained that Mubarak had secured an early (and uninformed) pledge of support for Hosni in 2007 as a condition for Egyptian backing of the choice of former French PM Strauss-Kahn to head the IMF. Berman, who castigated Hosni as an unabashed anti-Semite, was grateful for the clear expression of U.S. opposition, indicating it would help make the case for Sarkozy to revisit his exchange with Mubarak. She believed Sarkozy's top diplomatic advisers would not however broach the subject until at least the week of December 15. Berman accepted that high-level outreach from Washington could be helpful. A/S Hook stated there would be a bipartisan uproar at the selection of Hosni and it would inevitably force a review of USG engagement at UNESCO. He also stated that the election of Hosni as UNESCO DG would be an embarrassment to France, as the host nation. Finally, he noted that First Lady Laura Bush was slated to continue in her role as an honorary UNESCO ambassador through 2012.

¶3. (C) Hook corrected Berman's impression that the African Union (AU) had already formally endorsed Hosni's candidacy. He added it would be important the upcoming AU Summit not endorse Hosni, suggesting such a diplomatic defeat could force an Egyptian reappraisal of the situation. Speculating about alternative candidacies, Hook

noted UNESCO had never had a female Director General nor one from South America or Eastern Europe. Berman, recalling that U.S. and European efforts to challenge the election of an Asian to succeed Annan as SYG had not worked, suggested it was important on a tactical level not to exclude the option of an Arab League member. As in her 12/9 conversation with Pol M/C, Berman regretted that Mubarak had been able to force a clearly superior Moroccan candidate to stand aside (ref).

Horn of Africa: Harmony on Anti-Piracy, Dissonance on Somalia PKO

14. (C) Berman gave assurances of French comfort with forward language in the U.S. draft resolution that would authorize ground operations against pirates, although she anticipated pushback from other unspecified UNSC members. A/S Hook thanked Berman and emphasized the Secretary's conviction in the need to take advantage of broad P-5 agreement on the need for forceful action at this time. The U.S. side reiterated its strong hope for FM Kouchner's attendance at the 12/16 UNSC ministerial called for by the Secretary. (Note: The UNSC adopted the U.S. draft unanimously as resolution 1851 on December 16. End note.)

15. (C) Berman volunteered that positions diverged, however, when it came to launching a UNSC peacekeeping operation in Somalia. She dismissed arguments that a PKO was the only option that might stave off Somali collapse in view of the approaching withdrawal of Ethiopian troops, wavering AMISOM commitment, and the worrying specter of

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terrorist-affiliated Al Shabab taking charge. "A PKO won't help Somalia and it won't help the UN;" it is a "recipe for disaster and failure that would have an impact on all UN peacekeeping." She noted that critics of MONUC had already incited doubts about UN capabilities, undermining what had been mostly a period of improvement by PKOs. She discounted assertions that AF A/S Frazer had obtained pledges from several African states to contribute peacekeepers provided there be a UN mandate, doubting their capabilities, their level of training and equipment. Arguments for a Somalia PKO drawn from African troop contributors were "not really serious." She proposed instead that the UN should plan a smaller scale mission intended solely to protect the SRSG and UN offices in Mogadishu. Berman, who served 1992-1996 on the French UNSC delegation, told A/S Hook she had witnessed first-hand the UN's previous involvement in Somalia as well as the repercussions for all UN peacekeeping activities of the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

16. (U) A/S Hook cleared this message.

STAPLETON